

Amendment to the Claims

1. (Previously Presented) A sterilization method for sterilizing an object to be sterilized within a chamber, the method comprising:

a decompression step of decompressing the chamber;

a hydrogen peroxide supply step of supplying hydrogen peroxide into the chamber after decompression;

an ozone supply step of supplying ozone into the chamber after supplying the hydrogen peroxide and before the chamber reaches atmospheric pressure;

a sterilization step of sterilizing the object to be sterilized by diffusing the hydrogen peroxide and ozone supplied within the chamber;

an exhaust step of exhausting gas from within the chamber after sterilization by the hydrogen peroxide and ozone; and

a plasma generation step of generating plasma in a residual hydrogen peroxide and ozone atmosphere within the chamber after exhausting the gas so that hydroxy radicals generated by the plasma discharge allow the object to be sterilized.

2. (Previously Presented) The sterilization method according to Claim 1, wherein said exhaust step comprises a decomposition step in which gas being exhausted from the chamber is broken down into oxygen and water.

3. (Previously Presented) The sterilization method according to Claim 1, wherein said exhaust step comprises a decomposition step in which the ozone in the gas being exhausted from the chamber is broken down.

4. (Previously Presented) The sterilization method according to Claim 1, wherein said sterilization step comprises a step of circulating the sterilization gas in the chamber.

5-11. (Cancelled)